

acres in 1699. The large bulk of *puduvai* registries during 1099 related to small blocks of land occupied by *bona fide* cultivators, and as many as 6,511 acres, forming 82 per cent. of the total area registered under the Puduvai Rules, were lands of this description and were registered without auction. The areas sold by auction, after sub-division into conveniently small blocks, would have been much larger but for the continued stringency of the money market; but, as I said in my last year's address, this is not a matter for regret, since land is the greatest of national assets and should not be parted with in a hurry under circumstances which do not ensure its being put to immediate and proper use. With a view to prevent the indiscriminate registry of large blocks of unoccupied lands known as minor circuits and to divide them into blocks of conveniently small size, susceptible of acquisition, by purchase in auction or otherwise, by men of ordinary means, a temporary *puduvai* survey staff was created in 1096 to undertake the survey of such blocks which abounded in twelve interior taluks of the State. This staff worked in full strength for about a year and a half and surveyed over 80,000 acres or 125 square miles. As it was then found that the area surveyed was adequate for meeting all immediate requirements, the strength and operations of the staff were considerably circumscribed in 1098, and the functions of the reduced staff were mainly restricted in 1099 to correction work in the field and the completion of office processes of the survey already done. It is now found that, in six of the twelve taluks already referred to, *viz.*, Vilavankod, Kottarakara, Pattanapuram, Kunnattur, Muvattupuzha and Pattanamtitta, there is necessity for the further survey of minor circuit blocks, and it has accordingly been decided to depute, from the normal staff of the Survey Department, a surveyor to each of these taluks to work under the Taluk Tahsildar, subject to the professional control of the Superintendent of Survey.

4. As I stated in my address last year, an all-round reduction in the rates of valuation of the reserved trees standing on *puduvai* lands was sanctioned in 1099, and trees of less than 36 inches girth have been ordered to be entirely left out in the calculation of tree-value. This substantial reduction in the rates of *tadivila* will, it is trusted, afford additional facility to the people for securing land for the extension of cultivation.

5. **Lands to Depressed Classes.** Five years ago, the depressed classes in Travancore owned no lands worth mentioning and the few lands registered in their names were being exploited by capitalists of other communities. The Land Assignment Regulation was passed for the express purpose of preventing the exploitation of lands given to members of the depressed classes on concessional terms, and the Puduvai Rules were so revised as to remove the obstacles that lay in the way of the acquisition of Government lands by these communities. Ever since the adoption of these measures, the Land Revenue Department has been bestowing some attention on the registry of lands in favour of members of the depressed classes for habitation and cultivation, and it is found that, during a period of about four years ending with Vrischikam, 1100, an area of 1,446 acres has been assigned to them. The area so far registered, however, is altogether too small to meet the legitimate needs of these communities numbering nearly four lakhs; and I have to repeat that the progress made in this direction is very unsatisfactory and that the efforts of the revenue officers cannot but be characterised as half-hearted. The Registrar of Co-operative Societies has now been appointed the Protector of the Depressed Classes and entrusted with the specific duty of watching their interests, and Government expect better results to follow from this arrangement. The concessions enjoyed by individual members of the depressed classes in the matter of land assignment under Rules 24 to 27 of the Puduvai Rules have, at the instance of this officer, been extended to co-operative societies composed exclusively of such members and the maximum area that may be assigned to each such society without auction and payment of *taravila* has been fixed at 30 acres. Other facilities have also been created for such co-operative societies under the Land Colonisation Rules, to which reference will soon be made. It is hoped that the Protector of the Depressed Classes will see that the utmost possible advantage is taken of all these facilities.